

I. Introduction

The incumbent of the position serves as an Employee Relations Specialist in a Regional Office, providing specialized management-employee relations assistance and advisory services in labor relations and performance management to the Regional Director. The organization serviced includes professional, technical, and wage grade employees spread over several states.

II. Duties and Responsibilities

Advises the Regional Director and Program Managers on appropriate disposition of conduct (FPM 752) and performance (FPM 432) matters involving regional employees, up to and including removal action. Provides counsel and advice to program officials and employees, designed to enhance communication, clarify acceptable work practices, and offer assistance to troubled employees. Conducts OIG (Office of Inspector General) investigations. Analyzes the facts, makes comparison to precedent cases, and recommends appropriate penalties or other action to take in resolving the case. Works through program managers to ensure that each case is thoroughly documented and meets the provisions of pertinent case law, the Federal Personnel Manual, and APHIS Policy. Develops and issues letters of proposal and/or decision for disciplinary adverse and unacceptable performance actions. Responds to inquiries concerning the case by employees and their representatives, managers, and interested third parties. Develops and analyzes background material, prepares briefings and summaries, and makes recommendations concerning final disposition of cases.

Provides guidance and assistance to supervisors in the use of core, generic, and individual performance standards and in the rating of performance against such standards. Maintains effective monitoring and control systems to assure that standards are in place and appraisals are properly documented and processed in a timely manner. As necessary, conducts or arranges for training for supervisors on performance appraisal systems.

Coordinates activities in preparation for negotiation of local agreements between labor and management. Such activities include, but are not limited to: preparation of management's position on union proposals; discussion regarding union proposals and problem areas which may be indications of future union demands; maintenance of records on each current union contract and makes recommendations for a suitable location for negotiation.

Represents the Regional Director and serves as an assistant in the actual negotiation of local agreements and in discussions with unions. Actively participates with other members of the management team in establishing such points as initial offers and tentative compromises. During negotiation proceedings, contributes to decisions regarding final offers and compromises.

Conducts management evaluation surveys in areas serviced to assess the state of operations from the viewpoint of management, employees, and the Region. Surveys focus on employee relations including conflict of interest issues, performance management, and EEO. From survey and

interview results, develops a profile and report to be used as a guide in planning both short and long range management initiatives.

Participates fully with the Designated Equal Employment Opportunity Officer (DEEOO) and the Regional Equal Opportunity Advisory Committee (EOAC) Chairperson in planning and development of the Regional Affirmative Employment Plan (AEP) and the Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program for the Planning and Reporting (P/R) unit. Provides input on EEO aspects of program reviews, perceived barriers and solutions to under-representation within the work force. Monitors EEO statistics, ensuring accuracy of regional database, and reviews reports on employment data to determine progress in achieving Equal Employment Opportunity goals. Prepares various equal opportunity reports as requested by Agency Headquarters. Provides information to Equal Employment Opportunity investigators and counselors.

Directs the Region's program for incentive, performance, and special awards. Assists supervisory officials in preparing awards and assures that they are properly documented, warranted, and prepared in proper format.

Provides or arranges for needed training in employee relations, labor relations, and performance management. Determines ways that training can assist in solving problems associated with these areas. Advises management on how training may enhance employee morale and potential job performance.

Provides advice to the Regional Director and Managers in searching for sound solutions to a variety of management problems. Uses broad specialized knowledge which cuts across management areas and provides insight into the needs, priorities, peculiarities, and objectives of the organization in helping to identify the true problem(s) and respond from a program perspective. Serves as the Regional Director's troubleshooter with independent responsibility for reviewing and making recommendations on a wide variety of employee problems as they develop. May be dispatched to field locations to assist in setting up work groups on short notice in the event of an emergency. Serves as a permanent member of the Regional Position Management Committee.

III. Factors

I. Knowledge Required by the Position

Knowledge of the theories, principles, practices, and techniques of employee relations in order to advise on and process actions up to and including removal from the Federal Service.

Skill in conducting official investigations, analyzing facts, and developing information into briefings, summaries, and oral presentations suitable for agency officials and third party hearings.

Knowledge of theories, principles and practices of EEO, labor relations, performance management, training, and incentive awards program sufficient to provide technical guidance and staff assistance.

Knowledge of the Agency mission and objectives, and the priorities and problems of the particular Region to which assigned sufficient to advise on personnel problems from a program perspective.

2. Supervisory Controls

Assignments are made by the Regional Director in terms of broad objectives and results to be achieved, or evolve naturally and directly through discussion with managers concerning specific situations. The incumbent has wide latitude for the exercise of independent judgment in the selection of methods and techniques to follow in accomplishing the work; and must choose when to consult with or advise others in the personnel community to assure an integrated and consistent Agency approach.

Work is evaluated by the Regional Director based primarily upon objectives accomplished and results achieved. Personnel evaluations conducted by Human Resources Division and input from managers provide further feedback on quality and timeliness of service provided.

The incumbent receives technical advice and guidance from the Human Resources Division.

3. Guidelines

Guidelines include United States Code, Civil Service rules and laws, Federal Personnel Manual, Office of Personnel Bulletins, Letters and the DPM, APHIS Directives, and precedent case decisions from MSPB, EEOC, court cases and within the Agency.

The incumbent must use initiative and resourcefulness in determining which of the various guidelines to apply and how. In some instances there are no guidelines which apply to the situation.

4. Complexity

Assignments in the employee relations area require expert skill and seasoned judgment in determining the appropriate method, manner, and sequence of actions. In addition, the position requires the ability to respond to program needs in the areas of EEO, incentive awards, and performance management on an as-needed basis. Assignments are intermingled sporadically between functional areas, involve a great number of varying steps and actions, as well as coordination with other individuals spread throughout a relatively complex personnel community with very different roles, perspectives, and objectives. Incumbent must exercise resourcefulness in developing, checking, analyzing, and interpreting the facts before work progresses.

5 . Scope and Effect

The purpose of the work is to perform employee relations case processing as well as specified personnel management advisory services for the particular Region.

Much of the success of the Agency program depends upon public confidence in the Agency and its leadership. Employee conduct which threatens this confidence tends to impair operations and requires swift and consistent action, to include protection of the rights of the individual. If employee relations and other personnel actions are not accomplished in a timely and accurate manner, the effectiveness of the Regional program will be diminished.

6. Personal Contacts

Contacts are with supervisors, managers, employees, and Administrative Officers in APHIS; others in the personnel community to include several OPM offices and EEOC representatives from MSPB, OIG, and State agency representatives.

7. Purpose of Contacts

The purpose of the work is to seek and exchange information; to provide service; to resolve problems; to motivate, influence, and interview persons; and to justify, defend, negotiate, and resolve a wide variety of human resources issues.

Tact and persuasion must be exercised in dealing with employees and managers to aid in the identification of underlying causes of problems and to gain acceptance of proposed solutions.

8. Physical Demands

The work is sedentary, although it includes some walking, standing, bending, and carrying of light items. Some travel is required away from the Regional Office.

9. Work Environment

The work environment requires normal safety precautions typical of an office, meeting room, commercial travel, etc. In order to develop program knowledge and insight, selected visits are made in a training capacity.